National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Coding Questions and Answers

March 2008

1. **When a fire department is involved in some type of community service (parade patrol) and personnel/equipment are being used, what code best reflects what they are doing?**

   The code that bests reflects the activity in this case is "553 - Public service. Excludes service to governmental agencies (551 or 552)"

2. **A fire department responds to a vehicle fire on the highway and then had a couple of other fires down the road caused by the same vehicle as it drove further down the highway. Is that an exposure to the first fire, or separate fires, separate incidents?**

   The additional fires should be classified as exposure fires.

3. **I have departments that are plus-one coding their incidents to death. How can a department further define their actions taken without using a plus-one code on the actual action taken code? For example, a fire department responds to an EMS call (Incident type 321). The action taken is to provide ALS. They want to capture the fact that their medic went with the ambulance to the hospital. Is it possible that they can capture this information by using the apparatus/personnel module instead of using a plus-one code?**

   The current system does not have a method to capture the fact that their medic went with the ambulance to the hospital.

4. **An apparatus arrives at the scene but is cancelled before personnel exit the vehicle. How should this be coded?**

   The incident should still be coded as a "611 - Dispatched and canceled en route. Incident cleared or canceled prior to arrival of the responding unit. If a unit arrives on the scene, fill out the applicable code".

5. **How would the location of moving vehicle fire be reported? Would it be the location when first reported, the location when found by the first arriving unit or the location when it stops?**

   The location documented should be location where the vehicle stopped.

6. **A department responded to a reported MVA at a specific location, found none at the location, but continued on and finally found the MVA at a different location. Should the location be reported as the initial address or the final address?**

   The location documented should be location where the vehicle was found.

7. **Should an uncontained trash fire in a structure that only burns the trash be coded as an Incident Type #118 ("Trash or rubbish fire in a structure, with no flame damage to structure or its contents")? The other confined structure fire codes mention non-combustible containers but this code does not. If Incident Type #118 cannot be used, isn't Incident Type #111 the default which requires both the Fire and Structure Fire Module?**

   The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be "118 - Trash or rubbish fire in a structure, with no flame damage to structure or its contents."

8. **How would an incident involving smoke from a chimney misidentified as a hostile fire be reported? Incident Type #653 seems too specific: "Smoke from barbecue or tar kettle (no hostile fire)."**

    The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be "651 - Smoke scare, odor of smoke, not steam (652). Excludes gas scares or odors of gas (671)"

9. **Should a fire confined to a toaster, microwave oven, or conventional oven be coded as an Incident Type #113 or as an #111 or #121? Are these items considered cooking vessels or equipment involved? If coded as an Incident Type #113, the Equipment Involved in Ignition would not be captured because the Fire Module would not be completed but the cause would still be cooking.**

    The incident should be coded as a "111 - structure fire" and the equipment involved should be captured.

10. **How would an accidental medical alarm be reported?**

    The most appropriate code in the case would be "740 - Unintentional transmission of alarm, other" This Incident type was not specifically designed for this situation so the fire department may want to consider a plus one code to capture more specifics.

11. **I heard that when an electric range was the heat source in an unattended cooking fire, the range should not be identified as the "Equipment Involved in Ignition" because it neither malfunctioned nor was misused. Isn't this incorrect? If the "Heat Source (Fire, D2)" is Operating Equipment (Codes 10 – 13), shouldn't "Equipment Involved in Ignition" always be identified? According to the Cause Category Methodology Matrix, if "Equipment Involved in Ignition" is not identified when "Heat Source" is Codes 10 – 13, the cause will be undetermined. Could systematically omitting the "Equipment Involved in Ignition" be the reason for so many undetermined fires?**

    Yes.

12. **A fire department was called to a pipe bomb in a mailbox incident. The department did not remove or disarm the explosive, but called the police. How should this be coded?**

    The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be "552 - Police matter. Includes, incidents where FD is called to a scene that should be handled by the police."

13. **According to the CRG, if a department fills-in for a nearby department and then responds to an incident while filling in, the responding department should only fill out an incident report using the receiving departments FDID and incident number and report Aid Given/Received as None because once the giving department is in the receiving department's station it is the same as if they are the receiving department's personnel. The responding department should not fill out the incident as an Aid Given call using the responding departments' FDID and incident number. Basically, in that situation, the responding department disappears and is absorbed into the receiving department it is filling in for. However, if the responding department goes on an EMS call under those circumstances and leaves patient medical data with the receiving department to fill out the incident report, is this a HIPPA privacy violation?**

    HIPPA regulations in this case do not preclude the information from being collected although there are requirements for how the information should be safeguarded. Fire departments should get advice from their city attorney for specific guidance on how the information should be protected.

14. **Is there a method of capturing "number evacuated", whether mandatory or voluntary, in NFIRS?**

Number evacuated can be captured in the Haz-Mat Module, through special studies, or the information may be captured in the narrative.

15. **Ever since day one, our ski resort classification seems to always be by default "other". Vacation and/or second, part time use, homes and condos do not seem to have a straight forward section either. Do you have any suggestions?**

If the ski resort is a hotel it should be coded as such. The same is true for a single family home whether it is used for a year-round residence or a vacation home.

16. **Since Fire Department A EMS is not connected to the Fire Department A, is this considered a private Ambulance Service? If so, in the case of a motor vehicle accident with the Fire Department assisting EMS, what should the code be—a 311 or a 551 or is it 324(EMS Incident)? For clarification—the EMS is sometimes called along with Fire Department A in case there are injuries.**

The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be "311 - Medical assist. Includes incidents where medical assistance is provided to another group/ agency that has primary EMS responsibility. (Example, providing assistance to another agency-assisting EMS with moving a heavy patient.)" Incident Type 324 would be used if the department was responding in an EMS capacity.

17. For an incident where an electrical transformer (pole mounted or ground mounted) is burning, what Incident Type Code do you recommend? *The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be* "112 - Fire in structure, other than in a building. Included are fires on or in piers, quays, or pilings: tunnels or underground connecting structures; bridges, trestles, or overhead elevated structures; transformers, power or utility vaults or equipment; fences; and tents."

18. **How should Methamphetamine lab fires be coded?**

Assuming that the lab fire is in a single family home:

BASIC MODULE
    Incident Type = 111 (building)
    Property Use = 419 (1 or 2 family dwelling)
FIRE MODULE
    On-Site Materials = 545 (illegal drugs)
    On-Site Materials Use = 2 (processing or manufacturing)
    Fire Suppression Factor = 222 (illegal and clandestine drug operation)
    If, in addition to the above, you wanted to specifically capture that the on-site illegal drug was methamphetamine, you could create a state level 'plus one' code for code 545 (for example: '5451 Methamphetamine').
    The contents of the other critical cause and ignition fields would, of course, be dependent of the specifics of what happened in each individual fire.

19. What is the difference between incident types 736 and 746? When would it be the appropriate times to use each? The clause "no carbon monoxide detected" in 746 is confusing. If none was detected, how does one know if it was a malfunction or unintentional?

Incident Type 736 is a carbon monoxide detector activation caused by a malfunction of the detector. Incident Type 746 is used when there is an accidental; or manual activation of a detector that is not caused by a malfunctioning detector.

20. **What is a good definition of "Actions Taken" (Basic, F) code 92, Standby? Could this be used for personnel waiting in a staging area?**

    This is any time department personnel have been dispatched but instead of responding, are standing by for deployment. Yes, it can be used for personnel waiting in a staging area.

21. **Is the death of a fire fighter from a heart attack that was suffered 48 hours after responding to an incident considered to be related to that incident?**

    No. The limit under the Hometown Heroes Act, which is the guideline used by USFA, is 24 hours

22. **What incident type should be used for a mulch fire?**

    The appropriate Incident Type in this case would be "160 - Special outside fire, other."

23. **Someone threw fireworks into the house that self extinguished and the fire department had only light smoke to deal with. There were 4-5 burn marks on the floor of the kitchen. On the investigation end, this will be considered ARSON but should the incident be coded as a structure fire? The fire department coded it as smoke scare, odor of smoke. What should this incident be coded as?**

    This should be coded as a non-fire. Specifically, it should be Incident Type "481 (Attempt to burn)."

24. <u>**Field H3 on the Basic Module, selection "1 - Natural gas, slow leak, no evacuation or Hazmat Actions taken."**</u>**—If the dept asks a resident to step outside of the structure while it is being investigated, is that evacuation? What is the meaning of evacuation? We respond to this type of call often but do not conduct large scale evacuation and this code is causing some confusion when reporting it. Example would be a slow leak from a kitchen stove and the CO Detector has activated.**

    Yes. The definition of evacuation is the movement of persons from a dangerous place due to a dangerous situation.

April 2008

1. How or what number do I use for an exposure number in the Incident Key "A?"

Exposure number should always be left as 000, UNLESS you have a fire that spreads from one building, structure, property or vehicle to another building, structure, property or vehicle. When that happens, the primary incident would have an exposure number of 000, the first exposure would have an exposure number of 001, the second 002, etc.

2. I have an incident that includes a firefighter casualty but it is giving us an error that states you can not have a firefighter casualty on an incident that is a contained fire. The casualty actually came about due to this incident and I thought all firefighter casualties had to be reported on the incident they were related to. Is my thinking wrong or am I reporting it the wrong way?

Your thinking is correct. All injuries must be reported to the incident upon which they occurred. However, you cannot code an incident as a confined fire if you have any injuries or fatalities OR

a dollar loss greater than $5,000. When the firefighter was injured, the incident automatically became a full structure fire or similar incident.

3. What would be the incident type if a fire started in a sofa and stayed contained to that sofa?

If the sofa was inside the house, it would be Incident type 111 - Structure Fire.

4. Our fire departments are wondering what they should code the shooting incident that happened at NIU. If they were providing aid, I told them to complete a mutual aid report. But their question is what should their "actions taken" be—standby or incident command? I don't understand "incident command" so I thought I would ask this question. FYI: Incident command was set up & most departments said they "did nothing."

You are right. If the departments responded on the call as mutual aid, then they should complete a mutual aid report for an EMS incident. If all they did was stand by, then their actions taken should be standby.

5. I had a question about a call created in error from dispatch, and how that should be coded. The calls have no address, or unit to assign. They are simply a miss-typed key that creates "skipped" run number. It just seems if it was coded as a canceled call that it would skew statistics. What should be done?

It's not a call and an incident report should not be generated.

6. What would the code for Landing Zone Helicopter be? This is an incident type. I am thinking something should be under service call or something to that affect. I have a user looking for a code for it who said that it used to have something out there. I am not sure if my user is thinking of our old system or NFIRS.

Your user should use the incident type code: 462 Aircraft standby. This includes routine standby for takeoff and landing as well as emergency alerts at airports.

7. We had two people die from CO^2 due to a fire in an air handler. I'm assuming these would not be fire deaths. Is my assumption correct?

If those people died because of a direct relation to the fire in the HVAC system, then yes, they would be considered fire deaths.

8. Based on this rule and the below scenario that our customer is trying to report, which incident type and primary action taken should they use?

The scenario:
The Captain responded to a call for an alarm at the hospital in which the Captain reported it was a faulty smoke detector that had malfunctioned causing the alarm. He returned all responding units to service prior to arrival. The captain put the Incident type as 733-"smoke detector activation due to malfunction is used" and Primary Action Taken is set to 93-"Cancelled enroute" which we know is incorrect. To be able to close the report to get around the rule they selected "Other Action Taken" as the Primary Action Taken.

Which incident Type and primary action taken should they use for the above scenario?

Also, when you said that the incident type must be cancelled with an Action Taken of 93, would the cancelled type be 633-dispatched and cancelled in route?

In your example, the Captain arrived on the scene, so that means there has to be some sort of "Incident Type." In this case, he determined that the detector was "faulty" so an Actions Taken of "Investigate" would satisfy this event of a 733 Incident Type.

There is no Incident Type "633;" The Dispatched and Cancelled en route is "611." If any unit arrives on the scene, there must be some incident type other than 611. To use Actions Taken "93" you must have an incident type of "611."

9. A department (Dept A) gives mutual aid to another department by standing by in the receiving department's firehouse and the receiving department (Dept B) gets a call. As noted in NFIRS, the giving department becomes the receiving department and must document everything regarding the incident they responded to. How do they document resources? Is it the giving department's resources or does the receiving department put their resource count because they were out on another call?

The "giving" department (Dept A) who is filling in for the department who "received" the call (Dept B) should fill out the incident report using the "receiving" department's (Dept B) FDID and incident number and the information on the personnel of the "giving" department (Dept A) should be in the report.

May 2008

1. When responding to a residential grass fire (someone's lawn,) the grass burned. There was plastic sheeting underneath, small landscape concrete borders, and decorative fencing that sustained damage and will need to be replaced. Operations personnel coded this as a 143, attributed a dollar value and loss. Is this okay?

The Incident Type 143 code works fine for your example. Adding a dollar loss value is okay as well, since property was damaged.

2. If a fire was started on a wooden deck by an extra long extension cord arcing, would the heat source be (13) Electrical arcing (Operating Equipment category)?

We agree that the heat source code should be 13 - Electrical arcing. We also suggest that the department include a factor contributing to ignition of 54 - Equipment Overloaded and/or one of the 30 series codes for Electrical Failure, Malfunction.

3. How do we decide which action type to use for incident type 321 - EMS call? Excluding auto accident injury?

Incident type 321 is defined as: "EMS Call. Includes incidents where medical assistance is provided to another group/agency that has primary EMS responsibility. (Example—providing assistance to another agency-assisting EMS with moving a heavy patient.) As for the Actions Taken codes, any 20, 30, or 70 series codes would certainly be appropriate.

4. If a FD is on their own call and they are paged for mutual aid and cannot (do not) respond, what type of report they do? I surmise if they do not respond, they do not do a

report. Why couldn't they document why they did not respond in the remarks section of the call they are on?

If the department does not respond to a request for mutual aide, then there is no call for which to complete a report.

5. We have heard conflicting answers over the years in our area about reporting the Incident Type. If Willow Springs provides mutual aid to Evergreen Park for a building fire, which of the following should Willow Springs report:

111 - Building Fire
571 - Cover assignment, standby, move up

Willow Springs would report a 111. It is determined through the selection of Mutual/Automatic Aid GIVEN on Willow Springs' report that they provided aid. On the Evergreen Park report, they would indicate Mutual/Automatic Aid RECEIVED to show that they received assistance from another jurisdiction. The reports are then linked via the incident number.

6. One of my fire departments had a fire in a junk yard/ open area where there were 6 junk cars that were on fire. How should this be coded? As an IT = 131 or an IT = 160? And since they were all junk cars, should they be treated all as one fire (with no exposures) such as if the fire occurred in a dealership or a private residence where all the vehicles are owned by the same person/entity?

We suggest coding this as a 160 or as a 161 depending on whether or not the owner of the junkyard is selling parts from the junked cars or not. If he is, it should be 161. If he isn't, then 151 is also a possibility along with 160. In addition, this should be treated as one fire, as you say, similar to a parking garage fire or a dealership fire where the vehicles are just contents.

June 2008

1. We recently had two injuries while training. One of the injuries was severe enough to require medical attention and the other was some minor cuts that did not require any time off. Do both of these get their own NFIRS and are they filed under the fire casualty section?

Both of these injuries require a Fire Service Casualty Form and can be attached to the same NFIRS (EMS) Report. To accomplish this, create an incident report for a Medical Call and add a Fire Service Casualty Report for each firefighter that was injured.

2. Is there a definition of extrication to distinguish it from victim removal from a motor vehicle accident? If a department arrives on the scene of a vehicle accident and special equipment is not needed to remove the patient, would this be coded as 322 or 352.

The removal of a victim by mechanical means is by definition extrication. If a department arrives on scene to find a Motor Vehicle Collision where the patients may be removed from the vehicle without the use of cutting or spreading tools, then they should use incident type 322 (Motor vehicle accident with injuries. Includes collision with other vehicle, fixed objects, or loss of control resulting in leaving the roadway.).

If they arrive and find that they must use specialized rescue tools to gain access to or remove the patient from the vehicle, then they should use incident type 352 (Extrication of victim(s) from vehicle. Includes rescues from vehicles hanging off abridge or cliff.).

3. We had an unusual situation the other night. We were dispatched on a structure fire and wound up having two houses actually burning. The addresses of the houses were different so should another incident number be created because the original fire did not start the second one?

If the "first" house fire did not cause the "second" house fire, then they should be coded as two separate incidents.

4. If you respond to pull stations at a facility where the clients are not knowing what they are doing, what is the code for that Incident Type? Alarm sounded no fire/unintentional or central station malicious false alarm.

Incident Type 745, Alarm System Activation (no fire), unintentional. That would be the best code if the occupant that activated the system was not aware of "what they were doing" such as in an adult daycare facility. It could then be noted more specifically in the narrative for local records.

5. Personnel respond to a medical call. On scene, they have two patients with carbon monoxide poisoning. Should the call be typed a medical or a 424 (carbon monoxide incident)? (Haz Mat Released has 0-Special hazmat actions.... filled in)

Incident type is always what the units find upon arrival. If you are dispatched to a sick person call but upon arrival find out that it is due to carbon monoxide poisoning, the call type should be Carbon Monoxide incident.

6. Should a FD add in extraneous costs for dollar loss figures in non-fire incidents? A local fire department of mine is trying to determine the dollar loss figures in a tanker roll over. They want to know if they should include the money it is going to cost after the clean up.

Dollar loss should be collected for fire incidents (100 series) only. Dollar loss is an estimate of the total property and contents dollar loss and the pre-incident value of the property and contents and is a rough estimation of the total loss to the structure and contents, in terms of the cost of replacement in like kind and quantity. This estimation of the fire loss includes contents damaged by fire, smoke, water, and overhaul. This does not include indirect loss, such as business interruption. Including the cost of hazardous material removal in dollar loss is not an appropriate use of the fields.

July 2008

1. I have a question on how to classify a call that we had. The call was originally called in as a medical call and when we arrived on scene, we found that the person was having a medical problem. But, in the mean time, the person left food on the stove that caught on fire. We had to page out another truck to help with the fire. Should I separate that as two calls?

Yes, code those as different incidents. Simply use the narrative to explain what happened during the medical incident.

2. Would the following incident be considered a fire death? A truck was hauling asphalt when it blew a front tire, hit the guard rail, overturned on driver's side, caught on fire & burned. The driver was trapped inside & died.

It depends. Did the driver die because of the fire or because of the impact? A fire casualty is a person who is injured or killed as a result of a fire, including injuries or deaths from natural or accidental causes sustained while involved in the activities of fire control, attempting rescue, or escaping from the dangers of the fire. Fires include Incident Types 100–199 as recorded on the Basic Module, Section C. If a civilian injury is not directly related to fire, it may be reported on an EMS Module with the same incident ID information. A separate Civilian Fire Casualty Module is required for each fire casualty.

3. The specs say that the fields Incident Controlled Date & Time are required if a Wildland Module is completed. How about if a Fire Module is completed instead of a Wildland Module - are the controlled date and time still needed?

Controlled Date/Time is only required for the Wildland module. These are not required fields for the Fire module.

4. We have a contracted ambulance service in our city.   Many times, we have dispatched incidents where the Fire Department arrives on-scene but are waived off by the ambulance service. Would it be appropriate to use incident type 661 (EMS call, party transported by non-fire agency) for these types of calls even if we're unsure if the patient was transported? Or do you have another suggestion for the incident type to use? This is, of course, assuming Fire Department personnel provide no patient care.

Incident type 661 or 311 would be acceptable codes, depending on what the fire personnel do upon arrival.

5. When one of our units is on a move-up into another jurisdiction and responds to incidents within that jurisdiction, who should submit an NFIRS report for that incident? Them? Us? or Both?

If you have Moved Up to another department and run an incident for that department, you would enter that NFIRS report yourself using the FDID of the department you are moved into. In other words, department 1 Moves up to department 2; department 1 runs a call for department 2; department 1 completes a NFIRS report using department 2's FDID.

August 2008

1. I input the data for a fire that we responded to last night that was an outbuilding that was being torn down and burned. How would that situation be coded?

Based upon what was provided, we believe this would be a 111 - Structure fire.

2. We have five summer youth camps (2 for boys, 3 for girls) and one year around mixed camp (they have some adult weekends outside of the summer months). Each of the camps has multiple buildings. Some are for sleeping, dining, craft building, etc. At first, I thought it was "Not mixed use" since it was one camp. Then I began thinking it is "Mixed use,

other." In the next field, there is no category of camps. So, I have called them "Fixed use recreation place, other." There really needs to be something for camps. Most of our calls there are EMS. Have any thoughts on this?

That type of camp would be considered a 110 (Fixed use recreation places, other) and a Mixed Use of 10 (Assembly.)

*3. I h*ad an incident last week where three volunteer departments were dispatched to a fire. The dept that arrived 1st was out of their normal area. 2nd FD arrived was also out of their normal area. 3rd dept that arrived, it was their area. (These are small departments that are toned at the same time since they are all volunteer and in order to make sure they have enough coverage). Since dept #1 was first on scene & took control of the incident, are they considered the "main" dept in regards to NFIRS reporting? There's a lot more to this story—the fire was intentionally set by a fireman's wife (from dept #3) who drowned their newborn infant & set the fire to cover it up. I'm assuming FD #1 does the report & departments #2 & #3 do mutual aid reports.

No. It doesn't matter who arrived first. The fire occurred in FD 3's area. Therefore, the 3rd department is the primary ("main" department) while the other departments are providing mutual aid.

4. When entering information into the system, what should we do if we do not have a piece of information or the information does not fit the criteria (such as "property use" for an MVA.) If we leave it blank, it comes up as incomplete. But should we make up information we don't have?

Think of the Property Use as a field that indicates the use of the property where the incident occurred. For your example, an MVA would likely have occurred in one of the 900 series codes. 962 for example is a "residential street, road, or residential highway."

This is one of the required fields and an error is correct if it is left blank. You can refer to the "NFIRS Complete Reference Guide" for field and code descriptions as well as indicators of required fields.

5. Can you have property loss on an incident 251 - excessive heat? We have a lawnmower fire which melted the vinyl siding on the house. We've coded the fire as a 130 and treated the damage to the house as an exposure with incident type 251. Is this correct?

A lawnmower fire would not be coded as an Incident Type 251. Rather, it would be coded as a 138 and, at that point, you can add the house siding as an exposure.

September 2008

1. What is the proper code to use for a deck fire attached to the back of the house with no extension or damage to the house? I am leaning toward 111, but is there a better one to use?

Answer: You are correct. It is an incident type 111.

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2. What would be an appropriate actions taken code for removing debris from an auto accident such as broken glass, car parts?

Answer: The most appropriate Actions Taken for Incident Type 463 - Vehicle accident, general cleanup would be 50 - Fires, rescues, and hazardous conditions, other. Unfortunately, there isn't a more descriptive actions taken code for removal of debris from roadway. If you wish to avoid the "Other" code, you could use 73 - Provide manpower as well as 70 - Assistance other.   If you consistently use the actions taken code with this incident type, then it will have some meaning to you in your analysis of incident data.

3. I have a question about a Property Use and Mixed Property Use. The incident was a request for FD to do a helicopter LZ for EMS ambulance transfer. Location of the landing was at an outdoor practice field at a high school. Is the property use code - 938 Graded and cared-for plots of land? Is the Mixed Property code - 20 Educational use?

Answer: Yes, that would be the most accurate property use description. Some people might use code 215 - High School in property use which would also be acceptable. However, code 938 is the most accurate. Remember—this entry is to define the actual use of the property or location where the incident occurred. Since you responded to the football field and not just the high school, then that would be what you would want to code for fixed property use. And, yes, the mixed use is Educational.

4. I recently received an email from our State Fire Marshal's office related to data that was not accepted by the Federal NFIRS system. It was data that was in the Property and Involvement section of the report. I entered the owner and driver of a truck from Canada that was involved in a MVC with Haz-Mat specifics. I was told by our state that the Feds do not recognize other than US states for the reporting. I believe that the recordkeeping should accept Canada and Mexico owners' and occupants' complete information since we have free trade and the many vacation and work travelers of both countries. Otherwise, you are asking for incomplete data to compile your statistics. Our system is set up that if we enter any data within this section of the report, we have to enter complete data.

Answer: When completing the OPTIONAL Section K1 and K2 of the basic module, you should use the "Other" code to denote those vehicles, persons, etc that are from outside the US.

5. Incident Type 352- Extrication of victim from vehicle. Do I put down a casualty (H1) for this even if we do not fill out an EMS report and this was not a fire?

Answer: No. H1 in the Basic module is only for fire casualties. Other casualties should be counted using the EMS module or, as an alternative, you can capture their information in the narrative section.

October 2008

1.   What would you code a hot tub fire in the back yard? The tub has a gazebo around it, which did not burn. Only the tub burned.

Answer: If the gazebo was NOT involved, code that as an Incident Type 162 (Outside Equipment Fire.)

2. **Would the following be two exposures and what would the incident type(s) be?**

    The Area of Origin was Outside area, other (90) and the Type of Material First Ignited was Sawn wood, including all finished lumber and wood shingles.

    The remarks are: "The location is an Outbuilding or shed. The incident was determined to be a controlled burn that ignited the roof of a small barn. The fire had been extinguished by the landowner prior to fire department arrival. 12:38:10 arrived on scene. The following actions were performed on scene: Investigate, used the TIC to survey heat in the structure, none was found. E51 crew required the land owner to put out the fire. The landowner did have a current burning permit."

Answer: The Incident Type would be a 140 or 150 series code (outside fire) with ONE exposure as a 111 (Building Fire) for the shed.

3. **What would the incident type be where an occupant was using the self-cleaning function of their oven that caused only a small fire in the oven? There was only smoke when the fire department arrived.**

Answer: This incident should be coded as a 113.

4. **If we respond to a mutual aid structure fire, do we code this as a "111" Structure Fire or as a "571" Fill-in, Cover assignment, Stand-by? This is non-automatic.**

Answer: If you responded to the incident and it was a building fire, a 111 would be appropriate. You would then select "Mutual Aid Given" and enter their department information as required. If you only Moved-Up (Transferred) to their station, then you could use the 571 code.

November 2008

1. I had a fire department (FD #2) render mutual aid to FD #1. During the call, a fire fighter from FD #2 was injured. Does FD #2 complete the fire fighter casualty report since that is his department?

Answer: Yes, firefighter casualties are reported by the department to which the firefighter belongs.

1. How would you code a response to a group home where they pulled the alarm due to the smell of something burning? The investigation determined that a piece of plastic had fallen onto the heating element in the dishwasher. There was no fire, just melting.

Answer: It is recommended to use either code 400—Hazardous condition (no fire), other - OR – 251—Excessive heat, overheat scorch burns with no ignition.

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3. A fire department had a fire at a gas station. The fire was the result of someone pulling away from the gas pump on the island with the nozzle still in the car. The free flowing gasoline then ignited. Would this be an Incident Type 112: Fire in structure, not a building - because it occurred at the pump on the island? Or would it be an Incident type 160: Special outside fire?

Answer: A better choice than Incident Type 160 would be Incident Type 162 - Outside equipment fire. This includes outside trash compactors, outside HVAC units, and irrigation pumps. It excludes special structures (110 series) and mobile construction equipment (130 series).

Incident Type 112 also fits. However, we believe Incident Type 162 is a more accurate description of the incident.

4. NFIRS requires us to report fire fighter casualties that are not connected with an incident by creating an EMS incident report and filling out the fire fighter casualty module. What is the correct incident type to use? How do other departments handle this issue?

Answer: Incident Type code 321 (EMS call) is the correct code to use.

If a fire fighter is injured on an incident, then the incident type is always going to be the incident type of the original incident. However, if a fire fighter is injured in the station performing PT, while doing apparatus checks or station maintenance or while in training, then the incident type selected should be 321 since his/her injury should necessitate (at a minimum) the evaluation of and possibly the treatment of the injury and possible transport. Even if the fire fighter is not transported to the hospital or outpatient clinic for further evaluation the incident type should still be 321 - EMS Call.

Of course, there could be a multiple number of reasons for an injury to occur. For instance, you may have a fire fighter getting off an apparatus to go grocery shopping and is struck by a vehicle in the parking lot or along the street. In this case, the appropriate Incident Type code 323 would apply.

5. We responded mutual aid with a fire investigator and accelerant K9 to investigate a fire in another jurisdiction giving mutual aid after a fire incident. Would the correct incident type be 551- assist police or other governmental agency, or would it be a fire incident type?

Answer: While NFIRS is an all hazards reporting program, it was not intended to capture this type of activity, especially given the fact that a fire investigator typically completes their own separate incident/investigative/criminal report utilizing a separate reporting system. Having said that, if you insist upon capturing his/her response to assist another agency, Incident Type 551 would be an appropriate incident type code.

Further assistance on reporting this type of activity within your State can be obtained by contacting your State NFIRS Program Manager.

National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Coding Questions and Answers

December 2008

QUESTION 1: The fire department apparatus was dispatched to a scene, worked at the scene, and then was released from the scene. With the incident still on going, the apparatus returned to the same incident at a later time (& possibly with a different crew). How should this be reported? It sounds similar to any large multi-day incident like brush fires out west.

ANSWER 1: The preferred option is to report this as one incident, and enter the initial date/time they were dispatched in the appropriate fields and then enter the final date and time they cleared in the appropriate clear date/time fields of the basic module and apparatus and personnel module. If the same unit had a different crew, they should enter all of the crew members in the apparatus and personnel module as well as the Basic Module.

The other option is to count this scenario as two different incidents. However, this option only works if the department assigns their own incident numbers, or their dispatch center assigns a new incident number to the second response and they are providing mutual/automatic aid to another department.

The situation is similar to wildfires out west but not exactly the same since those incidents are run with a base camp/base of operations that units tend to go back to during their "off" hours. Hence, they don't really leave the incident scene. These units typically code the incident as one long incident (the preferred option discussed above) and enter the date/times they are dispatched and final date/time that they

QUESTION 2: I had an EMT die yesterday while working for an ambulance company. The EMT was a member of the volunteer fire department, but was working as an EMT for the ambulance company that is separate from the fire department. Would this be considered a fire death?

ANSWER 2: If the ambulance company is a third party provider with no FDID number, then he/she is not a fire service casualty. Only fire departments should be reporting their casualties via NFIRS.

QUESTION 3: I have a fire department that is using the landline call for Alarm Time instead of the actual toned time. Is this correct?

ANSWER 3: Alarm Time is the time the actual units are alerted that they have a call. If the department uses an Emergency Communications Center to triage calls and dispatch units, the Alarm Time is the time that the ECC alerts the individual units that they have a call. If the department receives the phone call directly from the public in their station, then this is the Alarm Time. In other words, Alarm Time is the time that the fire department units are notified that they are needed.

QUESTION 4: What is the best code to use for a tree down without any lines or other hazards?

ANSWER 4: The best code to use would be in the 800 series under "Severe Weather and Natural Disaster." For example, if the tree fell down as a result of high winds, code 813: "Wind Storm. Includes tornado, hurricane, or cyclone assessment. No other services rendered."

QUESTION 5: An incident with the Incident Type code #154 (154 Outside trash/dumpster) occurs in a backyard or driveway of a home but does not involve the home at all. Should the Property Use code be #419 or one of the #900 (outside property) series?

ANSWER 5: If it occurs in the backyard, you could use Property Use code #938 (Graded and Cared for Plots of Land). If it occurs on a driveway, use Property Use #962 (residential street/driveway). We suggest that Property Code #419 not be considered unless the dumpster fire was under the roof of the structure.

QUESTION 6: What Property Use code should be used for a Junkyard?

ANSWER 6: Either Property Use code #807 or #919 could be used. However, code #919 is the better choice.

QUESTION 7: We had a fire death in a house and also had six cars burn in this fire. Do I treat these car fires as exposures?

ANSWER 7: The answer depends upon the location of the cars. If the cars were in a garage of the structure that burned, they would be considered "Contents" and not exposures. If the cars were outside, owned by the same person as the structure, you could use one exposure report for all cars. If the cars were outside, owned by different people, you would use separate exposures for each car/owner.

QUESTION 8: What do we do if of our fire department was given an incident number by our dispatch center for a call to which we were not dispatched?

ANSWER 8: Skip this number in your reports (incident numbers at the national level are not sequential, so there will be no issue at the national level). If your vendor software does not allow this, then you must contact them for assistance on how to skip an incident number.

January 2009

QUESTION 1: We had a small grass fire in front of a mobile home which was adjacent to a shed that caught fire. Is this treated as a grass fire with an exposure report for the shed? Or can we treat it as one report with an incident type of 161 (Outside Storage Fire)?

ANSWER 1: Report this as a grass fire with an exposure for the shed.

QUESTION 2: How should a fire department report a fire that started on a deck that is attached to a home which was also damaged? Would the department report the deck as

the initial fire and the home as the exposure, or would this all be considered one fire since the deck is attached?

ANSWER 2: This should be reported as one structure fire (with no exposure) and the deck should be shown as the area of fire origin.

QUESTION 3: I had a department that had a car start a fire under a carport that was attached to a home. The department wrote up three reports total for this incident (a vehicle fire for the initial fire, a structure fire for the carport and another structure fire for the home next door that was damaged). However, I remember reading that if a car was parked in the garage and it caught fire, it would be considered one report coded as a structure fire. Then the dollar loss would include all damage to the vehicle and structure. Is this the case even if the carport was open and not an enclosed structure?

ANSWER 3: Yes, that is the case and it should be reported as one structure fire and the vehicle included as "contents of" the structure. The open carport is no different than an attached garage in this case; hence the vehicle is the origin but is also considered contents.

QUESTION 4: When equipment is involved in the fire (stove, refrigerator, etc.), do we need to track the information on each piece of equipment even if it was not the source of the fire?

ANSWER 4: No. Only the equipment that was involved in the ignition of the fire is tracked. The rest of the appliances not involved in ignition are considered only contents.

QUESTION 5: Engine 1 from Department "A" is on a cover assignment in Department "B's" jurisdiction. While covering, engine 1 runs three incidents in Department B's jurisdiction (Incident Types #321, #322, & #735). How does engine 1 from Department A record these three incidents? Do these incidents require a Department A incident number, or can they be part of the '571' Cover Assignment incident?

ANSWER 5: When Department A is filling in for Department B, they are no longer Department A. Instead, they become Department B. Therefore, in your scenario, Department A's Engine 1 becomes Department B. So, Department A should complete the three reports as if they are Department B, using Department B's FDID number and Incident Numbers.

QUESTION 6: If a person who is driving a vehicle intentionally drives off the road, flipping the vehicle, and then intentionally pours gasoline on himself and ignites himself, is it a suicide or a fire death for the purposes of statistical tracking?

ANSWER 6: If the victim was actually killed by the fire, then this would be considered a fire death. But you would need to enter this as intentional (Fire Module, Block E1, Cause of Ignition) and if the victim was injured or killed by the fire, then you would complete the civilian fire casualty module. You can explain the incident in the narrative on the Basic Module.

QUESTION 7: I have a question about what Incident Type code to use for two incidents. The first incident was smoldering embers inside the HVAC ductwork inside a

home (1or 2 family dwelling). The firefighters removed the ductwork and took it outside. The report writer coded it as a #100 "Fire, Other." The second incident occurred in large building under construction. The building is only a shell, walls and roof, but no doors or windows. The fire involved some roof paper that was stored inside the structure but there was no damage to the structure. Again, the report writer coded it as a #100 "Fire, other." Are these coded correctly or should Incident Type code #111 "Building Fire" be used for these two incidents?

ANSWER 7: Since the fire occurred inside a building/structure, Incident Type code #111 should be used for both of these incidents.

QUESTION 8: Is On-site Materials a required field for any incident?

ANSWER 8: The On-Site Material field is not Incident Type dependant but rather Property Use dependant. If a Property Use in the 500s, 600s, 700s, or 800s was listed in Block J of the Basic Module, then this field is required. This field may also be useful for other property uses.

February 2009

QUESTION 1: I have a fire department that keeps getting invalid reports that are asking for a Controlled Date and Time. I noticed that the Incident Type on all the invalid reports is 142 and the fire department is completing the Wildland Module. Why are these coming up invalid?

ANSWER 1: Any time a fire department uses the Wildland Module, controlled date/time is required. If they were using the Fire Module, the controlled date/time would not be required.

QUESTION 2: My fire departments are getting errors because sometimes they have to call for more apparatus. How should the arrival date/time be handled when there is more than one apparatus? Do they need to just put the times that the first apparatus arrives?

ANSWER 2: On the Basic Module, the Arrival Date/Time should be the date/time that the FIRST unit arrived on scene, and the Clear Date/Time should be date/time that the LAST unit clears the scene. The Alarm Date/Time is the date/time that the initial (first) units are alerted to a call.

On the apparatus and personnel module, individual units should enter the date/time they are alerted (ALARM DATE/TIME) as long as it is not BEFORE the alarm date/time on the Basic Module. They should then enter the date/time they arrive on scene (ARRIVAL DATE/TIME) as long as it is not BEFORE the arrival date/time on the Basic module. They should enter the date/time they clear the scene (CLEAR DATE/TIME) as long as it is not AFTER the clear date/time on the basic module.

National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Coding Questions and Answers

QUESTION 3: Are there FDID listings for federal and state agencies? How do you handle an incident where the Fire Department helps one of these agencies? And how do you handle an incident where the Fire Department gives aid to an ambulance unit that is not part of a fire organization—what do we put in the FDID field?

ANSWER 3: FDID's are assigned by each state. Therefore, if there is a state agency to which the State would like to have an FDID number assigned, the State can create that FDID.

Federal agencies like the US Forest Service are not NFIRS participating and have their own identifiers that they use. A fire department giving aid to them should enter "other aid given – 5" on the report (Basic Module, Field D) and leave the FDID and Incident number blank. If the fire department gets assistance from one of these state or federal agencies without an FDID, the fire department should roll all of the other agency's resources into the fire department's resources.

Fire departments may only provide aid to other fire departments. If they assist a non-fire department based ambulance service, they are not providing aid. So, the fire department should complete a normal incident report.

March 2009

QUESTION 1: I get a critical error on unit times when they are returned prior to arrival of the first unit. The coding is asking for a 93-cancelled in route which then errors on any action taken. What is the best way to code a multiple unit response that has one unit arrive on the scene after the other incoming units have been returned?

ANSWER 1: On the Basic Module, the Arrival Date/Time should be the date/time that the FIRST unit arrived on scene, and the Clear Date/Time should be date/time that the LAST unit clears the scene. The Alarm Date/Time is the date/time that the initial units are alerted to a call.

On the Apparatus and Personnel Module, individual units should enter the date/time they are alerted (ALARM DATE/TIME) as long as it is not BEFORE the alarm date/time on the Basic Module. They should then enter the date/time they arrive on scene (ARRIVAL DATE/TIME) as long as it is not BEFORE the arrival date/time on the Basic module. And they should enter the date/time they clear the scene (CLEAR DATE/TIME) as long as it is not AFTER the clear date/time on the basic module.

When you have multiple units responding to an incident and an arriving unit cancels the remaining units, you should enter the time that the cancelled units are cancelled as the clear time on the apparatus module for those units. This time cannot be prior to the arrival time on the basic module but it can be prior to the clear time on the basic module, as long as you select "93 - Cancelled in Route" as the actions taken on the apparatus module for the cancelled unit.

If your software vendor does not allow this, contact them for an update or fix as this is a new rule as of January 2009.

National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Coding Questions and Answers

QUESTION 2: I would like to be more accurate in my input data for dollar loss for fires. Do you know of a web site or program, preferably free, that I can get this info from?

ANSWER 2: Dollar Loss is a rough estimation of the total loss to the structure and contents, in terms of the cost of replacement in like kind and quantity and includes contents damaged by fire, smoke, water, and overhaul. It does not include indirect loss, such as business interruption. An accurate estimate is extremely helpful since it illustrates the magnitude of the fire problem, provides an additional indicator of the incident severity, and can be used to evaluate progress in fire protection. This information can help local communities, states, and the country determine the amount of money that should be spent on fire protection.

To better estimate your fire loss amounts, you can download the Building Valuation Data guide found on the National Fire Information Council website: http://www.nfic.org/exes_pdfs_downloads/Downloads/ICBO%20Bldg%20Valuation%20Table.pdf   This guide provides a standard formula for determining the cost per square foot of different building and construction types as well as modifiers for each region of the country.

For further assistance, you could also contact your state NFIRS program manager.